

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

The listing of claims below will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

**Claim Listing:**

Claims 1-12. (Canceled)

Claim 13. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The composition of claim 44,

wherein comprising water soluble the copolymer is formed as the polymerization reaction product of acrylamidomethylpropanesulfonic acid or salt thereof and acrylic acid or salt thereof ~~alpha, beta-unsaturated carbonyl compound; and~~  
~~alkali metal salt of carboxylic acid;~~

wherein the ~~water soluble~~ copolymer comprises from 5 to 95 wt.% structural units derived from 2-acrylamido-2-methylpropanesulfonic acid or salt thereof, and from 5 to 95 wt.% structural units derived from ~~acrylamide, vinylpyrrolidone,~~ acrylic acid or salt thereof, and 0 to 5 wt.% structural units derived from an at least bi-functional cross-linking agent; and

wherein the alkali metal salt comprises at least one alkali metal salt of C1 to C3 carboxylic acid.

Claim 14. (Previously Presented) The composition of claim 13 wherein the cross-linking agent is N,N'-methylenebis[2-propenamide].

Claims 15-16. (Canceled)

Claim 17. (Currently Amended) ~~[[A]]~~ The composition of claim 44, further comprising~~[[:]]~~

~~water soluble copolymer formed as the polymerization reaction product of acrylamidomethylpropanesulfonic acid or salt thereof and alpha, beta-unsaturated carbonyl compound;~~

~~alkali metal salt of carboxylic acid; and~~

~~alkali metal salt of at least + one halide;~~

~~wherein the copolymer is substantially hydrated by water and the alkali metal salt of carboxylic acid is substantially dissolved.~~

Claim 18. (Currently Amended) The composition of claim 17 wherein the alkali metal salt of at least one halide is selected from the sodium, potassium or ~~[[and]]~~ cesium salts of chloride, the sodium, potassium or cesium salts of bromide, and mixtures of said salts thereof.

Claim 19. (Currently Amended) A composition comprising:

~~water soluble~~ copolymer formed as the polymerization reaction product of acrylamidomethylpropanesulfonic acid or salt thereof and alpha,beta-unsaturated carbonyl compound; and

alkali metal salt of carboxylic acid;

wherein the copolymer:

has a weight average molecular weight of 1,000,000 to 5,000,000; and

when dissolved in an 80% cesium formate solution at a concentration of 2 pounds of the copolymer per barrel, measured at 120°F, yields

an apparent viscosity of at least 20 cPs,

a plastic viscosity of at least 15 cPs, and

a yield point of at least 5 lb/100 ft<sup>2</sup>.

~~wherein the copolymer is substantially hydrated by water and the alkali metal salt of carboxylic acid is substantially dissolved, developing an apparent viscosity of at least 20 cPs, a plastic viscosity of at least 15 cPs, and a yield point of at least 5 lb./100 ft<sup>2</sup> when dissolved in cesium formate brine at a concentration of 2 pounds per barrel and measured at 120 degrees F.~~

Claim 20. (Previously Presented) The composition of claim 44 [[19]] retaining at least 50 percent of its apparent viscosity after roller aging for 30 days at 375 degrees F and measured at 120 degrees F.

Claims 21-43. (Canceled)

Claim 44. (New) A composition comprising:

copolymer having functionality including at least sulfonate groups and carboxylate groups; and

alkali metal salt of carboxylic acid;

wherein the copolymer:

has a weight average molecular weight of 1,000,000 to 5,000,000; and

when dissolved in an 80% cesium formate solution at a concentration of 2 pounds of the copolymer per barrel, measured at 120°F, yields

an apparent viscosity of at least 20 cPs,

a plastic viscosity of at least 15 cPs, and

a yield point of at least 5 lb/100 ft<sup>2</sup>.

Claim 45. (New) The composition of claim 44 wherein the alkali metal salt of carboxylic acid consists essentially of a cesium salt of carboxylic acid.

Claim 46. (New) The composition of claim 44 wherein the copolymer is present in an amount of 0.05 to 5 wt. % of the combined weight of all solids of the composition and the alkali metal salt is present in an amount of 95 to 99.95 wt. % of the combined weight of all solids of the composition.

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